



State of Idaho Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

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RE: House Bill 821

The Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is a state agency with a legislative mandate to coordinate state-level programs for deaf and hard of hearing people and to act as an advisory board for other state agencies on deaf and hard of hearing issues. We are involved in educational issues for this population on a daily basis.

The Council's position on H821 is the following:

We agree that improvements need to be made with respect to the delivery system of deaf and hard of hearing education in Idaho. However, the impact and ramifications of hasty legislation without thorough expert consultation can be far-reaching and detrimental. Idaho has operated under the same educational delivery model for over 100 years. To entirely change it within two years and expect the local host school districts to have sufficient expertise to accommodate this sudden influx of deaf and hard of hearing students is unrealistic and dangerous.

We argue that there has not been sufficient time to explore and discuss the details to make such dramatic changes. Furthermore, policy-makers need more time to engage experts in the field of deaf education and administration in order to understand short- and long-term implications. Once final recommendations pertaining to a new delivery model are made, we support a careful and deliberate phased approach so that Idaho's deaf and hard of hearing students will not be the ones "left behind."